

[00043] What is claimed is:

1. A talking calendar comprising:
  - a visual display of days of year within a current year;
  - a memory containing pre-recorded audio information pertaining to historical events from prior years;
  - at least one sensor for detecting when a user selects a first day of year from said displayed days of year;
  - an audio speaker;
  - a controller for selecting date-specific historical information from said memory according to the selected day of year and sending said date-specific historical information to said speaker for playing, such that the user hears an educational message pertaining to a historical event which occurred on the selected day of year in a prior year.
2. The talking calendar of claim 1 wherein the visual display comprises a printed calendar sheet.
3. The talking calendar of claim 1 wherein the talking calendar is palm-sized.
4. The talking calendar of claim 2 wherein the at least one sensor comprises a plurality of switches disposed underneath the printed calendar sheet for sensing when a user has pressed a day on the calendar sheet.
5. The talking calendar of claim 2 wherein the printed sheet pertains to a particular month of year, the printed sheet includes a machine-readable code identifying said particular month of year, and wherein the talking calendar further includes a reader operatively connected to the controller for reading the machine-readable code and communicating information coded therein to the controller.
6. The talking calendar of claim 1 further comprising:
  - a microphone for recording a user-recorded message, and wherein the controller associates the recorded message with a second day of year selected by the user for later playback.
7. The talking calendar of claim 6 wherein the printed calendar sheet is a writable calendar sheet, such that a single calendar device allows a user to record a combination of written information and recorded oral information relating to a particular date for later review.

8. The talking calendar of claim 6 wherein the user can select a third day of year and retrieve a user-recorded message associated with said third day of year from a prior year for playback.

9. The talking calendar of claim 1 wherein said talking calendar is an educational toy for children.

10. The talking calendar of claim 5 further comprising:  
additional printed sheets, the printed sheets together defining monthly calendar sheets for each of the twelve months within a year, and wherein each of the monthly calendar sheets has a machine-readable month code.

11. The talking calendar of claim 10 wherein each monthly calendar sheet further includes a machine-readable year code.

12. The talking calendar of claim 6 further comprising:  
a plurality of category switches whereby the user can record user-recorded information according to a selected one of a plurality of categories and later play back user-recorded information according to the selected category.

13. The talking calendar of claim 6 further comprising:  
a plurality of modular removable writable memories, each modular memory corresponding to a respective year.

14. The talking calendar of claim 4 wherein the calendar sheet comprises a first calendar sheet, the talking calendar further comprising:  
eleven additional calendar sheets, the calendar sheets together defining twelve monthly calendar sheets, one calendar sheet for each month of the year; and  
a housing having a first slot and a second slot:

the first slot for receiving the first calendar sheet and holding the calendar sheet in proximity to the switches such that a user pressing on a day of the calendar sheet will cause a corresponding switch to be activated thereby indicating the user's day of year selection to the controller; and

the second slot for receiving and holding the eleven additional calendar sheets.

15. The talking calendar of claim 1 wherein the visual display of days of year within the current year comprises an electronic display.

16. The talking calendar of claim 1 wherein the talking calendar further comprises means for hanging said calendar on a wall.

17. The talking calendar of claim 1 further comprising:  
a computer interface for receiving date-specific data for later playback through said audio speaker upon selection of a corresponding date by said user.

18. The talking calendar of claim 17 wherein said date-specific data is programmed into a writable memory, the date-specific data having been chosen at least in part on the basis of the user's age and at least one of the user's ethnicity and religion.

19. A talking calendar comprising:  
a plurality of monthly sheets, each sheet having a machine-readable code corresponding to a respective month of the year; and  
a housing for receiving a selected one of the monthly sheets, said housing comprising:  
a housing body;  
at least one reader for reading said machine readable code in order to associate said selected monthly sheet with the sheet's respective month;  
a user input section whereby a user can select a day of said month by touching a portion of said selected sheet corresponding to said selected day;  
a memory containing information pertaining to each of a plurality of respective days; and  
a playback section for producing an audible playback of said information according to said user's day selection.

20. The talking calendar of claim 19 wherein the information includes information regarding events in history.

21. The talking calendar of claim 19 wherein the information includes information regarding holidays.

22. The talking calendar of claim 19 wherein the housing further comprises:  
a recording section for recording for later playback oral information associated with the user-selected day.

23. The talking calendar of claim 19 wherein the information includes information in each of a plurality of separate categories, with the user recording and playing back the information according to both the user's day selection and a category selection by the user.

24. The talking calendar of claim 23 further comprising:  
a plurality of buttons on the housing; and  
a sheet of adhesive labels, the labels containing indicia therein to indicate different respective categories of information, the labels being suitable for selective removal from said sheet and affixing in correspondence with respective ones said buttons, whereby the user can ascribe selected predefined categories of information to said buttons.

25. The talking calendar of claim 19 wherein said memory comprises both read-only memory and writable memory, the read-only memory containing information regarding historical events, and the writable memory containing user-programmed information regarding recent events.

26. The talking calendar of claim 25 wherein said memory comprises both read-only memory and writable memory:

the read-only memory containing pre-recorded educational information accessed via a first at least one button; and

the writable memory containing information recordable by the user and accessed via a second at least one button.

27. The talking calendar of claim 26 wherein:  
the button which accesses the pre-recorded information is a fixed function button pre-marked with indicia characterizing the pre-recorded information accessed thereby; and  
the button which accesses the recordable information is a user-defined button.

28. The talking calendar of claim 19 in combination with machine readable code capable of causing a computer and printer to print one of said monthly sheets having said machine-readable code thereon.

29. A talking calendar comprising:  
a housing including a microphone, a speaker, and a control unit, the control unit receiving input data via the microphone and outputting audible messages via the speaker;  
at least one fixed function switch for accessing preprogrammed information pertaining to selected dates according to subject matter of said information; and

a plurality of inputs for defining separate categories of voice messages to be separately recorded and retrieved.